

THE BUILDER,

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Still we must talk of ourselves, or of our cause, which is much the same thing, for we are now identified with the cause of which *THE BUILDER* is the organ. As is the cause, so must we be—gathering in strength, but necessarily exhibiting the early characteristics of great and strong things—slowly, steadily, growing and maturing. We aim at a solid support of sufficiency, no dash of originality, no fascinating display, to end in an early exhaustion, and after two or three years' existence to be worn out and disappear. No, the structure we have planned has its apex high, and broad must be its base. The uninteresting, if such it be to some, the uninteresting but all-important duty of laying down a great and sound foundation, is one from which we will not be diverted by the impatience of one section of observers, or the unwise penetration of another. We speak not of ourselves so much as of the object and cause of which we are the mere representative and organ; and that object and cause is too momentous for us to attend to any comments on our personal deportment, or on such trifles as ourselves, or our ways.

These remarks are offered to those of our friends who express a desire to see *THE BUILDER* walk erect while it is yet the mere infant-crysalis. We have no fault to find with their observations; on the contrary, we are grateful to them, and are proud to see their anxiety displayed in our behalf; but again we tell them, that they must be content to see us putting in our foundation for a while longer; let them rest assured that we have given no consideration as to the superstructure, with which we are satisfied they will be tolerably well pleased. As an example of the species of comment we allude to, we give an extract from that excellent journal the *Mechanics' Magazine*:

"Another new journal, which is exclusively devoted to the interests of Builders, including all classes connected with the building business, from the labourer to the architect. But little original strength is put forth in these numbers; neither does the plan of the journal appear to be as yet more than half developed; but, as far as we can judge from the imperfect specimens before us, the editor has very correct views of the important service which such a literary organ is capable of rendering to the numerous classes to which it is addressed, and is well qualified to carry them out."

We should, indeed, be sadly wanting in a right sense of the duty which is imposed upon us, and prove ourselves utterly unfit for our task, if we did not lay down and abide by this consolidatory policy,—not with the hare, must we run, but with the tortoise. Our track of to-day is a great beginning—the progress and end inconceivable; already are the elements in motion, working in little eddies and circles, that have to be brought together in one vast and well-controlled power, important to art as well as to the happiness of its practitioners. We are vain enough to regard our little project as a centre, towards which large influences are destined to graduate. We are armed us bodies of common affinities aggregating, preparatory to a final coming together. We see architectural societies, unions, and associations forming on all hands, and we know what the end must be, and that speedily,—one grand national affiliation of confederation, out of

which every good and security is to spring for its members the building classes.

If this is not so, we have sadly misinterpreted the signs of the times,—and we are the more shallow-paced, and so philosophers. If before ten years elapse, we have not our local and our grand incorporation of the trades, then we will venture to say we shall have their disincorporation and destruction—the contrifical principle is inherent in all this vitality and activity; hitherto we have had no system, and the body corporate has been flying off in wild gyrations, troubled, deranged, and unsettled; the remedy and reaction is now in process, and a salutary change may be expected.

But all this is not to be done by the chance efforts, the haphazard throws of either societies, or their organs, one of which latter we profess ourselves to be. *THE BUILDER* is not to be regarded as a little isolated fugitive publication, struggling with the mass of mere literary trappings, to cater to the public cravings for idly curious gossipings and wonderment; no, as we said before, it is a centre, a pole of attraction—little and insignificant in itself—and, like all other centres, a mere abstract entity; but there is no sphere, however vast, and however ponderous, that has not its centre, like unto this, and for the same objects.

And mark what we say, as to our project forming a model of action to extend itself into every ramification of our commercial and trading polity. Class organization and centralization is being developed and worked out on every hand, and as a consequence we shall speedily see the title of our paper, and its spirit, applied in reference to every important subject of industrial interest; already the clerical, legal, medical, naval and military, banking, shipping, railway, and a variety of other interests are represented by papers bearing their respective designations; but the Building interest, perhaps first in importance, remained till this period; from this period, however, it will not stand alone, and it will not be wanting to take a lead in that great work of national concentration, in which consists safety and security.

What do we propose by this incorporation, we term it? Why, nothing more or less than the return to the wise principles of our ancestors, the establishment of trade guilds, modified, it is true, by change of time and circumstances, as architecture itself requires to be, but regulated by the same principle—that we should have a visible brotherhood and the real and authorized working of union, and not the bare profession of brotherhood, and the shadowy, unauthorized, and illegal workings as hitherto.

Guilds, upon this principle, like our civic corporations and merchants' companies, upon a right basis of qualification, election, and government, would be a remedy for most of the grievous evils of which we are constantly hearing complaints, and from which we are as grievously suffering.

Guilds, and these guilds will exist abroad, in some of the best regulated and most flourishing states; requiring, it is true, some adaptation or extension of their principles to suit the change of time and circumstances. Guilds are the visible body and tangible exterior to denote the unanimity, the power, and the very existence of the interests they represent. Associations we have without end, they are unavoidable, they force themselves into being in the very nature of things; companies, clubs, fraternities, leagues, spring up spontaneously, under special or general provisions or immu-

nities; the time is come when the building fraternity is required to set an example of the recognition of this natural tendency to concentration, and to unite in one grand commercial brotherhood, masters and men, architects, and every section below them; not working as if with dissimilar interests, jealous and watchful of one another, but bound together by one just and equitable compact, with all antagonisms put under their feet.

Then would all this violence, these struggles, strikes, and commotions, cease—wages, prices, profits would be regulated, where alone they should be, in the council-chamber of the guild—competition and contracts, if not super-added, would be pursued under honourable rules and superior tendencies—schools of art, instituted and conducted by their proper guardians—building acts and regulations discussed and settled by those best calculated to judge of what is right and proper, and not by amateur meddlers, and the officious and ignorant—the distinction of office, and the confidence of his fellow-citizens, would be the reward of honourable practice in trade and professions—talent would be fostered and encouraged—colleges and endowments founded—and, finally, the generous provision of the brotherhood be held out to the suffering and unfortunate. No workhouse would ever see an applicant for its hard relief, in the person of a duly apprenticed and qualified workman or tradesman—as honourable retreat would be secured to him by his brethren in the hospital of the guild of which he was a member.

This is no picture of the fancy, or conjuring up of a novelty—it has existed, does exist, and may again exist in reality. All this is being done at present among us irregularly, and at random as it were. Every provision of which we have spoken is at work, or attempted to be put into work, under various guises—Assurance Societies, Mutual Protection Clubs, Chartered Companies, &c. &c. What we want is a sensible, practical, and direct recognition and working of the principle, without confusion or waste, and the management to be vested in the right hands, those who are versed in the question of the interests they are set to protect, and have none but those interests to look to the protection of.

We could cite innumerable instances to the point, but content ourselves with one—say a railway company. This is a body of common carriers and road-makers, made up of a heterogeneous mass of persons, who are incorporated together for their common interests, and elect from their body a council of managing directors, chairman, &c. This species of incorporation, however, has many objectionable points in principle, to which guilds would not be exposed. In guilds every man is the guardian of his own private interests and property, and therefore monopolies, as affecting the public, are less to be dreaded,—the principle, however, is much the same—it is indispensable for the working of our railways, and in like manner, for our chartered banks, &c. How much more necessary is it for the well-being of our trading fraternities, and if it had existed, how many evils would have been avoided?

But as we have already said, there is nothing new in it. It was found necessary in former times, and worked advantageously for art. It is found necessary again, to produce the same result.

We recollect that during the late commotions in the manufacturing districts, some of